

The Insect World

SAIC entomology students in search of the numerous and amazing (at least if it has six legs)

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

The Truth About Your Fig Newtons



In the wild, the mutualistic relationship between figs and the fig wasps that pollinate them leads to figs full of tiny, tiny dead wasps. Cultivated figs are a different story. Most fig varieties grown in the U.S. (mission figs, kadota figs) do not require pollination for the figs to ripen, and thus contain no wasp parts at all. There is one exception: The calimyrna fig. Fig growers attach paper bags containing fig wasps gathered from wild fig trees to their calimyrna trees, and the female wasps pollinate the figs while attempting to lay their eggs. The flowers inside the fig are too long for the fig wasp's ovipositor, and the wasp either moves on or dies within the fig without laying any eggs. If the wasp dies

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there, its body is quickly dissolved by enzymes in the fig.

the point"

At worst, your fig might contain the completely dissolved remains

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of one tiny wasp. For more detailed information:

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